

IN THE CLAIMS

1. (Currently Amended) A method for ensuring the reliability of technical components, especially of internal combustion engines and the parts thereof, by means of a test program, comprising the following steps:

- a) selection of at least one critical component and at least one critical damage mode;
- b) definition of a reliability target goal for each critical component;
- c) selection of at least one test procedure for each critical component;
- d) allocation of a test duration and/or test length for each test procedure;
- e) allocation of acceleration factors in connection with the individual components and test procedures;
- f) determination of an equivalent test duration and/or test length for the critical component and the respective test by means of acceleration factors and test duration or test length;
- g) calculation of the verifiable reliability for the critical component on the basis of the chosen test procedure;
- h) comparison of the verifiable reliability with the reliability target; and
- i) modification of the test program when verifiable reliability deviates from the reliability target and the departure is larger than a predefined tolerance quantity.

2. (Currently Amended) A method especially according to claim 1, wherein ~~the~~ deterioration models are prepared for the critical components

and damaging modes, and the acceleration factors are prepared on the basis of the deterioration models.

3. (Currently Amended) A method especially according to claim 2, wherein the preparation of the ~~damage~~deterioration models contains the step of comparing the duration until the occurrence of a damaging in practical use with the duration until the occurrence of the same damaging in the test.

4. (Cancel)

5. (Currently Amended) A method especially according to claim 4~~1~~, wherein at least one test procedure is modified when the verifiable reliability ~~lies beneath~~is smaller than the reliability goal.

6. (Currently Amended) A method especially according to claim 4~~1~~ wherein the steps c) through i) are repeated until the verifiable reliability corresponds at least to the reliability goal~~target~~.

7. (Cancel)

8. (Currently Amended) A method especially according to claim 11, wherein at least one test procedure is modified when the equivalent test duration and/or test length ~~lies beneath~~is smaller than the service life goal~~target~~.

9. (Currently Amended) A method especially according to claim 7~~11~~, wherein at least the steps c) to g), j) and k)~~h)~~ are repeated until the equivalent test duration and/or test length corresponds at least to the service life goal~~target~~.

10. (Previously Presented) A method especially according to claim 1, wherein the results of the individual tests are represented as a load matrix for the individual components or are saved to a database.

11. (New) A method for ensuring the reliability of technical components, especially of internal combustion engines and the parts thereof, by means of a test program, comprising the following steps:

- a) selection of at least one critical component and at least one critical damage mode;
- b) definition of a service life target for each critical component;
- c) selection of at least one test procedure for each critical component;
- d) allocation of a test duration and/or test length for each test procedure;
- e) allocation of acceleration factors in connection with the individual components and test procedures;
- f) determination of an equivalent test duration and/or test length for the critical component and the respective test by means of acceleration factors and test duration or test length;
- g) comparison of the equivalent test duration and/or test length with the service life target; and
- h) modification of the test program when verifiable equivalent test duration and/or test length departs from the service life target and the departure is larger than a predefined tolerance quantity.

12. (New) A method according to claim 11, wherein deterioration models are prepared for the critical components and damaging modes, and the acceleration factors are prepared on the basis of the deterioration models.

13. (New) A method according to claim 12, wherein the preparation of the deterioration models contains the step of comparing the duration until the occurrence of a damaging in practical use with the duration until the occurrence of the same damaging in the test.

14. (New) A method according to claim 11, wherein the results of the individual tests are represented as a load matrix for the individual components or are saved to a database.